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Double debut delight: Paul and Grasser triumph in the rain

- Maximilian Paul and GRT Grasser Racing Team claim their first DTM victory at the Nürburgring
- Porsche driver Thomas Preining finishes fifth and leads championship at the halfway point
- 49,300 visitors enjoy a rapid race weekend with typical Eifel weather

Nürburg. First victory in only his second DTM outing – Maximilian Paul (Dresden) created quite a stir at the Nürburgring on Sunday. The 23-year-old started from 13th place in his Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo2, before producing a stunning fightback as the rain became increasingly heavy. He moved into the lead on lap 26 and went on to take the chequered flag after 35 laps. This terrific drive earned Paul and GRT Grasser Racing Team their first success in the DTM. “That was a perfect race. I got off to a really good start, the pit stop was flawless, and the pace was there at all times, because we got the car set-up right. It was important for me to stay calm behind Lucas Auer and then to take my opportunity at the right time. It also proved beneficial that I was able to use the ADAC GT Masters race weekend in mid-July as preparation for the DTM races,” said Paul. The first eight races of the season have now produced eight different winners – a DTM record. Laurin Heinrich (Würzburg) was also rewarded for a strong performance. The 21-year-old Porsche driver climbed nine places and made it onto the DTM podium for the first time. He was joined on the rostrum by third-placed Lucas Auer (A), who backed up his fine form in the Eifel after finishing runner-up on Saturday in his Mercedes-AMG GT3.

Key facts, Nürburgring, race 8 of 16

- **Circuit length:** 3,629 metres
- **Weather:** 12 degrees, rain
- **Pole position:** Ricardo Feller (Abt Sportsline, Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo2 #7), 1:29.562 minutes
- **Winner:** Maximilian Paul (GRT Grasser Racing Team, Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo2 #19)
- **Fastest race lap:** Marco Wittmann (Project 1, BMW M4 GT3 #11), 1:35.871 minutes

Light drizzle meant almost all the drivers started Sunday afternoon’s eighth race of the DTM season on wet tyres. Pole-sitter Ricardo Feller (CH) initially held onto the lead in his Audi R9 LMS GT3 Evo2, ahead of the Mercedes-AMG pair of David Schumacher (Salzburg) and Lucas Auer (A). However, Feller could do nothing to prevent Auer from taking the lead after just a few laps, and the Austrian then managed to open a slight gap ahead of the rest of the field. Behind him, there were numerous overtaking manoeuvres and changes of position on an increasingly wet track. Whilst all that was going on, Paul and Heinrich were closing in on the front-runners with every lap.

After a crash involving the Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo2 of Alessio Deledda (I), and the ensuing yellow phase, Auer, Paul and Heinrich came in for their mandatory tyre change shortly before the end

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of the pit stop window. The youngsters then switched to attack mode: Paul passed race leader Auer on the 26th lap, before Heinrich followed suit and moved into second place on lap 31. With the race drawing to a close, Arjun Maini (IND) skidded off the track. The safety car was consequently called into action and eventually led the field home, with Paul, Heinrich and Auer occupying the three podium positions. Maro Engel (Monaco) crowned another strong performance in the Mercedes-AMG GT3 with fourth place. Behind him, championship leader Preining (A) produced a tactically smart race in his Porsche 911 GT3 R to ensure he tops the table at the halfway point of the season.

Feller was the best-placed Audi driver in sixth, ahead of fellow Audi man Luca Engstler (Wiggensbach) in seventh place. Thierry Vermeulen (NL) guided his Ferrari 296 GT3 to eighth place from 23rd on the grid. By contrast, Schumacher lost six places and had to settle for ninth at the iconic 3.629-kilometre circuit. Lamborghini driver Franck Perera (F) from SSR Performance, whose team-mate Mirko Bortolotti (I) was unable to start due to a technical issue after tasting victory on Saturday, gained 14 places and completed the top ten.

Laurin Heinrich: “The overtaking manoeuvre against Lucas Auer was racing of the highest standard. My first DTM podium is a dream come true for me. On Saturday, we were denied a good result by the yellow phase. This time, I came into the pits later and benefitted from doing so. We kept a cool head, even in the challenging weather conditions.”

Lucas Auer: “I was really good at the start. Unfortunately, I did not get the tyres up to the right temperature after the pit stop. That meant I was no longer able to match the pace at the front. On the whole, however, it has been a successful weekend for us and we travel with a good feeling to the Lausitzring, where I won my first DTM race in 2016.”

Result of race 2 at the Nürburgring

1. Maximilian Paul (D/GRT Grasser-Racing-Team)
2. Laurin Heinrich (D/Team75 Motorsport), +0.600 seconds
3. Lucas Auer (A/Mercedes-AMG Team Winward), +1.320 seconds
4. Maro Engel (D/Mercedes-AMG Team Mann-Filter), +1.954 seconds
5. Thomas Preining (A/Manthey EMA), +3.248 seconds

The full race result is available at dtm.com/en/results.

2023 DTM calendar

26.05. – 28.05.2023	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
23.06. – 25.06.2023	Circuit Zandvoort / NL
07.07. – 09.07.2023	Norisring
04.08. – 06.08.2023	Nürburgring
18.08. – 20.08.2023	DEKRA Lausitzring
08.09. – 10.09.2023	Sachsenring
22.09. – 24.09.2023	Red Bull Ring / A
20.10. – 22.10.2023	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg

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